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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER ARABL EG SO

SUBJECT: SOMALIA: ARAB LEAGUE MISSION TO SEEK REGIONAL,
INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

REF: SECSTATE 162369 (NOTAL)

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political
Affairs William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) According to Arab League (AL) officials, an AL delegation is preparing to visit Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea, Sudan, and Somalia from roughly October 8 - 22. The visit is intended to prepare for the next round of AL-hosted talks in Khartoum on October 30. Salah Halima, Advisor to Secretary General Amr Moussa on Somalia and Sudan and

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previously Egypt's Ambassador to Somalia, told poloffs on October 4 that he and the AL's Director of African Affairs Samir Hosni would lead the delegation. In Somalia, their intended last stop, they will meet representatives from both the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). The delegation will also seek meetings with contact group representatives in Nairobi and is open to meeting with U.S. officials in Kenya.

¶2. (C) Halima explained AL objectives for the visit, noting the importance of making progress on power-sharing arrangements as agreed in Khartoum by TFG and UIC representatives. Ambassador Halima told poloffs that the delegation will seek assurances from Somalia's neighbors that they would not interfere in Somalia. Halima said that it is an "inconvenient time" for an international peace-keeping force and for lifting the arms embargo, and therefore will argue against sending peacekeepers at this time.

¶3. (C) Halima stated that the AL does not have a "monopoly on initiatives" in Somalia. The AL would seek information on projects that might form a basis for cooperation between the TFG and UIC. The AL is "not competing" with IGAD initiatives but rather wants to build on what IGAD has started.

¶4. (C) Asked about the UIC, Halima believes that the leadership is generally moderate, with the exception of "two or three" prominent hard-liners. However, according to Halima those hard-liners know they must moderate their stance because "the world will not accept an Islamic state in Somalia." During the upcoming mission, the AL delegation will attempt to seek out the UIC's "vision" for the future of Somalia. Halima suggested that the U.S. approach the UIC directly to open a dialog.
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